

hoped it wasn't the signal of what the new Democratic majority's education policy would be because I couldn't imagine the new Democratic majority—or the old Democratic minority, for that matter—or any of us on either side being against the Teacher Incentive Fund.

What the Teacher Incentive Fund does is almost the most crucial thing we need to do in helping our schools succeed. It makes grants to States and cities that are doing the best work in trying to find fair ways to reward outstanding teaching and to reward good principals. Every education meeting I go to, and I have been going to them for years, that ends up being the No. 1 thing we need to do. First are parents, second are teachers and principals, and everything else is about 5 percent. In other words, a child who has a head start at home is a child who is going to get an education almost no matter what else happens. But if you add an outstanding teacher and an outstanding principal to whatever happens at home, the school is better and the classroom is better and the child succeeds. This is especially true for low-income children in America, which is exactly what the Teacher Incentive Fund is designed to meet.

Well, I wasn't disappointed because within 5 minutes after I began, the distinguished Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, the assistant Democratic leader, came on the floor, and I think I am being fair in characterizing his remarks when he said: Whoa, wait a minute. This is a good program. In fact, I just received a call this afternoon, said Senator DURBIN, from the superintendent of the Chicago schools, and he said we need this program. He said we have a lot of low-income, poor kids who aren't making it, whom we are leaving behind, we want to help them, and this helps us do that. He said we have a grant under the Teacher Incentive Fund to do it.

We heard further testimony at a roundtable in our Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee that in the Chicago schools they closed some schools where children were not learning year after year after year. What did they do? They put in a new team—a new principal, a new set of teachers. And what did they do with the teachers? They paid them \$10,000 a year more than they were otherwise making to make sure they would go there because they were the teachers known in Chicago to be able to help low-achieving students achieve.

We all know from our experience and research that virtually every child can learn. Some children just need a little extra help getting to the starting line. If you don't get it at home, you especially need it at school. And where you get it at school is from outstanding teachers and principals.

So it wasn't Senator DURBIN, who is the assistant Democratic leader in the Senate, who was trying to kill the Teacher Incentive Fund. So I have been

wondering for the last few days, well, then, who was it? Who was it? Well, now I know, Mr. President, because they have announced it.

Today comes a letter to me—"Dear Senator ALEXANDER"—on behalf of the National Education Association, the NEA, with 3.2 million members, saying:

We urge your opposition to several ill-conceived amendments to the continuing resolution. Specifically, we urge you to vote "no" on an amendment to be offered by Senator ALEXANDER, Republican of Tennessee, that would provide \$99 million for the teacher incentive fund.

So the NEA, in its brilliance, has written me a letter to ask me to vote against my own amendment.

I am astonished. That doesn't surprise me so much. Any of our offices can make a mistake. But what I want the President to know, and I want our colleagues to know—I want them to know who is against this, and I want the world to know what they are against. What they are against is helping find a fair way to pay good teachers more for teaching well and to train and help good principals lead schools, especially in big cities where we have a lot of low-income children who are falling behind.

This is not some abstract notion. The President had recommended \$100 million for the Teacher Incentive Fund as part of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In a bipartisan way it passed several years ago, and we are in the midst of a remarkably bipartisan approach to see what we need to do about NCLB as we reauthorize it for 5 years, and part of it is the Teacher Incentive Fund.

In a very tight budget, President Bush has recommended not just \$100 million for the next year, he has recommended \$200 million.

I placed into the RECORD a few days ago Secretary of Education Spellings' letter saying this is very important. We have just started this program. We made a number of grants to cities all across America, 16 grants across the country, at least one State—in South Carolina. You have cut us off. You stopped us from making an evaluation and reporting back to the Senate, to the Congress, how this is working. You are disappointing these school districts who have stepped up to do this.

That is what has happened. Just to be very specific, here is the kind of thing that the Teacher Incentive Fund grant does. Memphis, our biggest city, has an unusually large number of our lowest performing schools. It is our poorest big city, one of the poorest big cities in America. It has a real solid school superintendent, she's excellent, and they are working hard to improve.

A lot of the Memphis citizens are putting together a special effort to say: One of the single best things we can do in Memphis is to take every single one of our school principals, put them through a training program for a year, hook up with New Leaders for New Schools to do that, continuing after

the year, and then we will put them back in charge of their school. We will give them autonomy to make the changes they need to make, and we will see if these children can succeed because we know if they can succeed, if we help them the correct way—we give them extra hours, as we have in our charter schools, give them extra training, we know they will succeed.

Memphis City Schools and New Leaders for New Schools were awarded a grant for \$3.1 million in the year 2006, the first year after the 5-year grant totaling \$18 million. Over the 5-year grant, Memphis plans to provide training and incentive grants to 83 principals serving almost one-third of the schools in the Memphis school system. Principals will receive incentive grants of at least \$15,000 a year.

What is wrong with that? Why would the largest educational association in America oppose taking a city with low-performing students and saying we are going to kill the program that trains your principals and pay them \$15,000 more a year to do a better job? Why would they do that?

The assistant Democratic leader doesn't agree with that. At least he said so on the floor of the Senate. I don't agree with it. I don't think the parents of the children agree with it. The school superintendent doesn't agree with it, nor does the mayor. Who is against this? We are trying to pay more money to the members of the association that is trying to kill the program. That is what we are trying to do.

It is not just Memphis. I think it is important that my colleagues in the Senate—if the snow and the ice has not caused them to flee to the suburbs. I think most of them are in their offices, maybe a few are even listening. I want them to know that the National Education Association wants to kill the program for the Northern New Mexico Network, the Northern New Mexico Network for Rural Education, a nonprofit organization, one of the 19 grantees of the Teacher Incentive Fund. It is partnering with four school districts. They serve a region with high levels of poverty, high concentrations of Native Americans and Hispanic students, extreme rural conditions, small schools. So the NEA wants to kill the program to help make those teachers and those principals better.

Here's another project, New Leaders for New Schools in the DC public schools. This is a coalition with DC public schools and several others, to provide direct compensation to teachers and principals who have demonstrated their ability to move student achievement.

What a terrible thing to reward—teachers who have demonstrated an ability to move student achievement. Let's kill that program right away. We don't want that happening in the District of Columbia, do we?

Let's go to the Chicago public schools. Chicago has taken a lot of steps in their public schools. The